

## Comments



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION IX  
75 Hawthorne Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Superintendent  
Mohave National Preserve  
222 East Main St., Suite 202  
Barstow, CA 92311

JAN 14 1999

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JAN 22 1999  
MOHAVE NATIONAL  
PRESERVE

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and General Management Plan (DEIS) for **Mohave National Preserve**. Our review is pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

In the DEIS, the National Park Service (NPS) identifies three alternatives for the management of Mohave National Preserve, including "no action." The NPS has not identified a preferred alternative, but Alternative 1 is listed as the "proposed plan" for the Preserve. Alternative 1 seeks to balance the agency's mission of protecting resources and providing for visitor enjoyment with Congressional mandates to maintain grazing, hunting, mining, and existing utility corridors. The Kelso Depot would be restored to serve as a museum and interpretive facility. If funding becomes available, private property within preserve boundaries would be purchased to minimize the likelihood of impacts associated with proposed uses that conflict with the agency's management goals for the Preserve.

EPA1

EPA has assigned a rating of **LO** (Lack of Objections) to the DEIS. We commend the NPS for its commitment to preserve and protect surface and groundwater resources. We similarly commend the NPS for its commitment to implement the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan.

Please consider the following comments as you prepare a Final EIS and a Record of Decision for the project:

EPA2

\* Since this is the first time that the NPS has developed a general management plan (GMP) for the Preserve, the scope of potential impacts stemming from proposed management strategies cannot be fully described; therefore, we request that the NPS continue to involve EPA in further planning efforts tiered to this GMP, particularly the Natural and Cultural Resources Plan, which will guide resource management activities at the Preserve, and the Land Protection Plan, which will guide land acquisition.

EPA3

\* With respect to grazing, the DEIS states that the Park Superintendent will determine appropriate use, restrictions, and fees (DEIS p. 84). We encourage the NPS to set grazing fees at a level which will fully compensate the NPS for its management of grazing on

## Responses

EPA1. Comment noted.

EPA2. Comment noted. Please note that the *Land Protection Plan* was included as a draft in appendix B of the *1998 Draft Environmental Impact Statement*.

EPA3. The grazing management plan would evaluate grazing fees and appropriate fees will be established in compliance with NPS Special Use Permit guidelines. This plan would also specifically evaluate grazing activities and practices, and would prescribe specific mitigation measures to minimize its impacts upon the preserve's lands.

## Comments

NPS lands, and allow sufficient funds to take necessary actions to minimize or correct environmental problems stemming from continuing grazing within park boundaries.

EPA4

\* With respect to military overflights, we are concerned that the provisions of the Desert Protection Act may set a precedent which could potentially erode the definition of "wilderness" under the Wilderness Act; therefore, we encourage the NPS to work with the military to minimize noise impacts to designated wilderness areas to the maximum extent possible.

EPA5

\* EPA supports the proposal in Alternative 3 to develop a Mineral Management Plan, and we encourage the NPS to incorporate this aspect of Alternative 3 into the selected alternative at the Record of Decision stage.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. If you have questions about this letter, please contact Leonidas Payne of my staff at (415) 744-1571.

Sincerely,



David J. Farrel, Chief  
Federal Activities Office

## Responses

EPA4. The preserve is a member of a recently established interagency overflight working group with the military that is working to address low-level flights over NPS units and BLM wilderness areas. Because overflights are legislatively authorized, overflights will continue to occur, but mitigation of noise will be of primary concern.

EPA5. Comment noted.